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To: The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr.
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Hannibal G. Williams II Kemerer
Chief Counsel, Legislative Affairs, Office of the Attorney General

Re: SB 27 – Criminal Procedure – Restorative Justice Program – **Support**

The Office of the Attorney General urges the Judicial Proceedings Committee to favorably report Senate Bill 27, Senator West's legislation to create a Restorative Justice Program within the Victim Services Unit of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services.

Senate Bill 27 has all of the indicia of creating a restorative justice program that follows best practices. Among other things, it is victim-centered and notes that "participation in the program is voluntary and confidential and may not be mandated by any court or agency"¹ Other jurisdictions have had this type of program for years. Indeed, as of 2015, thirty-two (32) states had Restorative Justice programs enconced in statute.² Restorative Justice has shown how to build, strengthen, and repair relationships between individuals and establish supportive social connections within affected communities. It shifts the perspective from viewing harm as not just a violation of the law but as a violation of people, and focuses on the offender taking accountability so the victim can heal.

There are many more reasons to commend the bill, but suffice it to say that the Office of Attorney General supports its passage and for the General Assembly to ensure that it is fully funded. We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 27.

cc: The Honorable Chris West and Committee Members

¹ S.B. 27, 2023 Legis. Sess, 445th Gen. Assemb. (Md. 2023) § 11-1203(b)(3)(iii).

² Shannon M. Sliva & Carolyn G. Lambert, *Restorative Justice Legislation in the American States: A Statutory Analysis of Emerging Legal Doctrine*, 14 J. OF POL'Y PRAC. 77, 85 (2015) (available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275246984_Restorative_Justice_Legislation_in_the_American_States_A_Statutory_Analysis_of_Emerging_Legal_Doctrine/download).